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ABSTRACT

This report is designed for use by those specializing in the preparation of elementary and middle school principals and by those whose focus is on the inservice aspects of professional development. The paper identifies the proficiencies for K-8 principals and groups them into four major categories. The report elaborates on these categories, together with abilities and skills that K-8 principals develop with professional preparation and continuing activities. "Experience and Education" is the first of the four major categories of proficiencies; this section looks at the knowledge, expertise, and attitudes characteristic of the effective principal in four basic areas: child growth and development, training and learning processes, general knowledge, and school climate. Section 2, "Leadership Proficiencies," includes the categories of leadership behavior, communication skills, and group processes. "Supervisory Proficiencies," section 3, describes the principal's duties in relation to curriculum, instruction performance, and evaluation. The brief conclusion describes the principal's position as a continual learner. Appendixes provide two instruments to guide principals in assessing their own personal proficiencies and in establishing a plan for professional growth. Acknowledgments are included. (CJH)

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ELEMENTARY & MIDDLE SCHOOLS

KINDERGARTEN THROUGH EIGHTH GRADE

EA 018 695

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FOREWORD

With the release in 1984 of *Standards for Quality Elementary Schools: Kindergarten through Eighth Grade*, the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) sought to provide an informed definition of the basic qualities that characterize educational excellence in the nation's elementary and middle schools—the K-8 levels. At the core of that definition were two fundamental propositions:

- Children's early school years are crucial to their long-term success in education (and indeed in life), and
- As the school's leader, the building-level principal is the single most important figure in determining the effectiveness of those years.

Given this combination, it is essential that K-8 principals be among the most able and effective of education leaders—that they possess appropriate personal characteristics and aptitudes and that their professional preparation be relevant and effective. This companion to *Standards* deals in particular with the latter.

Most preparation programs do a good job of providing an adequate knowledge base. They too often fall short, however, in translating such knowledge into practical application at the elementary/middle school level. *Proficiencies for Principals* seeks to address this discrepancy and in general to serve as a guide for those who manage and conduct professional development experiences, for K-8 principals themselves, and for parents, school board members, and other interested citizens.

As with *Standards*, the observations and conclusions herein are based both on findings of research and on the day-to-day experience of practicing K-8 principals. We hope it will be of interest and use to all institutions, organizations, individuals, and groups concerned with assuring that our elementary and middle schools enjoy the best possible leadership.

Mildred L. Walton
President

Samuel G. Sava
Executive Director

INTRODUCTION

In September of 1983 the National Association of Elementary School Principals launched a two-phased project to map the relatively uncharted area of standards for K-8 education. The initial phase of this venture culminated a year later in a position paper entitled *Standards for Quality Elementary Schools: Kindergarten through Eighth Grade*. That publication sought to identify those factors that make the difference between a quality school and one that needs a change in direction.

One of the major characteristics of the former, it concluded, is a determination shared by students and teachers and parents to constantly seek improvement. In such schools the pursuit of excellence becomes as important as its achievement, and the catalyst is the principal. Phase Two of the Standards Project called for the next logical step—to set forth in a position paper the skills and traits and capabilities that make for the kinds of principals who develop K-8 schools of outstanding quality.

In identifying such proficiencies* the findings build in part on the research, discussions, and deliberations attendant on the preparation of the initial study. They also reflect insights provided by other K-8 principals from all parts of the nation, from professors of elementary and middle school administration, from leaders of professional education associations, and from a panel of prominent educators specifically associated with the professional preparation and continuing development of elementary and middle school principals.

The initial plan was to group the various skills and characteristics involved under the seven categories found in the *Standards* document: Organization, Leadership, Curriculum, Instruction, Training and Development, School Climate, and Evaluation and Assessment. When it became evident that this arrangement would produce some awkward overlapping, however, it was decided to regroup them into four major strands: Experience and Education, Leadership Proficiencies, Supervisory Proficiencies, and Administrative Proficiencies.

The body of the report focuses on these strands, together with a number of contributory proficiencies cited for each strand as examples of the abilities and skills K-8 principals need and that professional preparation and continuing development activities should help engender. The Appendixes provide two instruments to guide principals in assessing their own personal proficiencies and in establishing a plan for needed professional growth.

It is NAESP's hope that this report will be of immediate interest and use by those institutions and individuals specializing in the preparation of elementary and middle school principals and by those whose primary focus is on the inservice aspects of professional development. We hope it will also be considered by local education agencies and local boards of education toward assuring that K-8 principals receive the kind and extent of preparation—preservice and inservice alike—that prepares them to carry out public schooling's most important assignment.

*The more common word in education circles is "competencies." However, "competency" merely suggests adequacy. "Proficiency," on the other hand, is defined as "advancement toward the attainment of a high degree of knowledge or skill," and that is what this document envisions.

It would be unrealistic to expect all principals to possess and practice each and every one of the proficiencies listed here. But every principal must be enabled and encouraged to fully develop their expertise in these proficiencies. Given the cruciality of K-8 schooling, it is vital that elementary and middle school principals be among education's finest.

The publication of this report marks the completion of the NAESP Standards Project. The overall goal, however—to assure that the young people who will be America's leaders in the 21st Century are served by principals who instill an enduring zest for learning—requires that America's education community continue to explore the proficiencies that distinguish a truly outstanding elementary or middle school administrator. Nationally and within our state affiliates, NAESP is committed to that prospect. We invite all our fellow educators across the land, at every level, to join forces with us in its pursuit.

EXPERIENCE AND EDUCATION

Four characteristics can be said to be basic to success as a school principal at the K-8 levels. Three are a direct function of training—a liberal arts education that provides a solid background in the fundamental aspects of the curriculum, advanced skills in the teaching and learning processes, and a thorough understanding of practical applications of child growth and development. The fourth and in some ways the most important is a strong sense of caring—a sincere commitment to children's welfare and progress.

All of these basic areas are found to one degree or another in all graduate school preparation programs for elementary and middle school administrators. Even the best preparation programs, however, do not provide a level of practical understanding and skill comparable to that gained from working directly with students in the classroom on a day-to-day, sustained basis. That is why NAESP, through its official platform, suggests that at least three years of successful elementary or middle-level classroom teaching be a requirement for certification as an elementary or middle-level principal.

In recent years the teaching and learning processes have come under particularly close scrutiny. One result has been the development of a body of significant new information regarding the ways in which students learn and teachers teach. Similarly noteworthy advances have been made in understanding "learning readiness" and other aspects of children's growth and development. Additional new information in these areas inevitably will be developed in future years; the dynamics and strategies involved are so complex and so challenging that exploration of them must be constant. Any principals who fail to keep abreast of the results will become less-than-proficient principals.

Expertise in the teaching and learning processes must of course be coupled with a sound liberal arts foundation. Such a background provides the foundation upon which knowledge of curriculum content rests.

As for the fourth element of principal proficiency—caring—that must of course be an inherent aspect of the individual's character. Still, caring is not enough unless the person graced with that trait has learned to express it effectively and to the purpose at hand, which is not to "like children" in some essentially sentimental fashion but to be sufficiently concerned to see to it that they learn, and *want* to learn.

Summing up, among the numerous characteristics and skills and proficiencies that mark the effective K-8 principal, four areas are basic:

- Child growth and development: The principal must bring to the position expert knowledge in the field of child growth and development, preferably fortified by extensive practical experience in teaching children, and must be capable of guiding the staff toward assuring that the curriculum is relevant and appropriately challenging.
- Teaching and learning processes: The principal must similarly be soundly grounded in the teaching and learning processes, in both contemporary and traditional patterns of instruction, and in validated instructional techniques and strategies.
- General knowledge: The principal must bring to the position a basic liberal arts foundation productive of a firm grasp of basic curriculum content and an understanding of the relationship between that body of knowledge and the elementary/middle school curriculum.

- School climate: The principal must be a caring person who knows how to create a school climate or "culture" that is based on mutual trust and respect, is productive of high morale, and places strong emphasis on children's social and academic development.

LEADERSHIP PROFICIENCIES

It is axiomatic that where you find outstanding schools you will find outstanding principals.

K-8 schools are extremely complex institutions, not at all "elementary" in the sense that Sherlock Holmes used the word. Their administration necessarily calls for a wide range of organizational, administrative, managerial, fiduciary, and leadership proficiencies essential to achieve and sustain quality in the school program.

The person who must constantly demonstrate those skills is the principal, the one person who is directly involved in every aspect of the school's operation. Teachers and parents play vital roles in shaping the school's quality and character and making it successful, but in the final analysis the key figure is inevitably the principal. As former Secretary of Education T. H. Bell pointed out, it is axiomatic that where you find outstanding schools you will find outstanding principals. And as the present Secretary of Education William Bennett added, elementary principals stand with only one institution that is of greater importance in children's education—the home and family.

Principals who are proficient in leadership tend to share many traits in common. They are characterized by eagerness to improve; while disinterested in change for its own sake, they are never satisfied with the status quo. They are open to new ideas, grateful for constructive criticism, avid to learn.

Principals of quality elementary and middle schools see themselves as leaders and welcome their leadership responsibilities, placing particular stress on the instructional leadership aspects of their assignment. They are actively involved in the change process within their schools and have acquired the range of abilities that principals must possess if they are to create receptivity to change among the pupils and staff and the community, and to smoothly manage the change process.

Professional development activities should provide experiences that instill a firm understanding of these aspects of the principal's job and that add to the reservoir of skills upon which the principal can draw in leading the way to truly first-rate elementary and middle school programs.

Cited on the following pages are specific leadership capabilities and characteristics that can be regarded as basic to true proficiency, grouped under the headings of Leadership Behavior, Communications Skills, and Group Processes.

Leadership Behavior

Effective principals display values, beliefs, and attitudes that inspire others to achieve the school's goals.

The key to quality K-8 schools is the commitment demonstrated by their principals—evidence that the principals *care* about the students and staff and are eager for them to succeed.

The leadership styles of principals vary as situations and personalities vary, but they tend to share certain basic traits and characteristics. Effective principals display values, beliefs, and personal attributes that inspire others to bend every effort to achieve the school's academic, social, and cultural goals—and thereby assure a meaningful and enjoyable school experience.

Such principals are secure; they project a positive attitude and enjoy an attractive image; they inspire confidence, trust, and respect. They recognize the various interrelationships and varying priorities and values that inevitably exist among a group of people as sizable as that involved in the operation of a school. Their expertise in human relations is such that whatever differences may exist, the school is marked by harmony and a sense of togetherness.

The principal of a high-quality elementary or middle school is an initiator, displaying creativity and vision in decision-making and putting the available human, material, and financial resources to their most productive use. Such a principal encourages staff members and parents to exercise leadership in developing useful new experiences for the children, and is quick to give credit for such contributions.

Deeply as proficient principals feel about their school, they can also see beyond it. Typically they are active in local, state, and national professional associations, and feel an obligation to advance the principalship. They make similar contributions to their community, and are active in community affairs. In these and other dealings, they are recognized as "doers," as people to be turned to in a constructive cause.

To be considered proficient in the exercise of leadership skills the principal must:

- Inspire all concerned to join in accomplishing the school's mission...
- Apply effective human relations skills...
- Encourage the leadership of others...
- Analyze information relative to problems, make decisions, and delegate responsibility as appropriate...
- Create a powerful esprit de corps, a strong sense of togetherness, through effective human relations techniques...
- Identify and creatively utilize human, material, and financial resources to achieve the school's goals...
- Apply established principles and strategies of effective leadership...
- Exercise vision in defining and accomplishing the mission of the school...
- Participate as a member of local, state, and national professional groups.

Communication Skills

The image principals project tends to form the perception of the school itself.

Of the various proficiencies that make outstanding K-8 principals, few are more important than the ability to communicate effectively. The image such principals project, both verbally and nonverbally, tends to form the perception of the school itself, not only by the pupils and staff but by the community at large. It is essential that principals understand how to make that image an effective and useful one.

Going beyond the impact of image, it is important also that information be conveyed clearly and persuasively about what the school is accomplishing. People will be far more likely to support a school—or enact a tax levy—if they have acquired an understanding that the children there are receiving a valuable experience. Similarly, teachers and students are buoyed by media acknowledgment of their accomplishments and thereby impelled to achieve even more. And beyond these considerations, as a public servant responsible for the operation of a public institution, the principal has an obligation to keep the public informed.

Effective K-8 principals comprehend the facts and principles of effective community relations. They are on good terms with the groups and individuals who make the community what it is, know how the media function, and make a point of becoming acquainted with the education reporters who cover their school.

School administrators constantly interact with diverse groups of people in a wide variety of settings, and the proficient principal capitalizes on such encounters to highlight student achievements, underscore the school's mission, and nip any false rumors in the bud.

To be proficient in communication skills the principals must:

- Persuasively articulate their beliefs and effectively defend their decisions...
- Write clearly and concisely so that the message is understood by the intended audience...
- Apply facts and data to determine priorities...
- Understand the impact of their personal image and how to make that image an effective and useful one...
- Know their verbal and nonverbal communications strengths and weaknesses and their implications...
- Use current communications technology to communicate the school's philosophy, needs, and accomplishments...
- Understand the philosophy, functioning, and practices of the mass media...
- Be an active listener so as to truly hear others...
- Be able to forthrightly disagree without being disagreeable...
- Promote and use higher-level thinking skills...
- Model the behavior expected of others.

Group Processes

The proficient principal capitalizes on the commitment and energies of others to assure schoolwide accomplishment.

Important though the principal's role may be in a school's operation, the principal is not the school. Many other people are involved, including some who have certain skills that go beyond those of the principal. The proficient principal is one who capitalizes on the commitment and energies of these people to assure schoolwide accomplishment. Such principals understand the dynamics of group processes and effectively apply them. They develop strategies that emphasize the importance of others while maintaining a constant focus on the task at hand.

To be effective, a professional preparation program must instill a solid grasp of the principles of group processes and provide the basic skills for bringing these principles to life in managing any needed changes in a school's operations, philosophy, and goals. It is additionally important for principals to keep abreast of developments in the field of organizational psychology, as part of their continuing professional growth.

To be proficient in the management of group processes, the principal must:

- Involve others in setting short- and long-term goals...
- Apply validated principles of group dynamics and facilitation skills...
- Understand how to resolve difficult situations by use of conflict-resolution methods...
- Be aware of various decision-making techniques and be able to match the appropriate technique to the particular situation...
- Identify—with staff—the decision-making procedures the school will follow...
- Understand the process of consensus building and apply that process both as a leader and as a member of a group...
- Achieve intended outcomes through the use of principles of motivation.

SUPERVISORY PROFICIENCIES

As supervisor of instruction, the principal focuses on four basic elements: Curriculum, Instruction, Performance, and Evaluation.

The principal's highest priority, according to NAESP, must be instructional leadership. It is thus crucially important that professional preparation and continuing development for elementary and middle school administrators focus significant attention on proficiency as a supervisor.

As supervisor of instruction the principal focuses on four basic elements: Curriculum, Instruction, Performance, and Evaluation.

The first element, *curriculum*, calls upon the principal to be proficient in articulating what the children are to learn and what the teachers are to teach. *Instruction* involves the proficiencies needed by the principal in helping teachers develop more effective teaching practices. *Performance* entails the proficiencies needed in supervising the teachers, students, and noninstructional staff. The fourth element, *evaluation*, focuses on the proficiencies needed by the principal to assess how well the students are learning and the teachers are teaching. These assessments determine whether and why a change in program direction is called for, and why a program should be continued.

Curriculum

The proficient principal assures that the curriculum is built around specific goals and objectives comprising a continuum of learning.

In quality elementary and middle schools the principal is proficient in leading the staff and the community to a consensus regarding what students are to learn—what skills they are to master, and what values, attitudes, and habits they are to acquire. Available in such schools is a cooperatively developed statement that spells out these decisions and describes what teachers are expected to teach and what students are expected to learn. In leading the faculty in the implementation of the curriculum, the principal ensures that it is supported by adequate resources of time, money, and materials.

The principal further assures that the curriculum is built around specific goals and objectives comprising a continuum of learning that faithfully responds to the needs and abilities of all the children involved.

As noted in NAESP's *Standards for Quality Elementary Schools: Kindergarten through Eighth Grade*, a sound curriculum benefits students in such ways as the following:

- They develop a strong foundation in the fundamentals of reading, writing, and mathematics; and they acquire basic knowledge and understanding in science, social studies, fine arts, health, and physical education.
- They become competent verbal and nonverbal communicators—learning to express themselves well in speaking, reading, and writing; to be attentive listeners; and to be at home with information technology.
- Students work in an environment of excellence marked by high expectations and persistent striving toward mastery levels of achievement.
- They become self-motivated, learn to take advantage of opportunities for personal development, and emerge with a lasting zest for learning.
- They respect and demonstrate appreciation for their peers, their teachers, the staff, and the educational process itself; they practice tolerance, flexibility, empathy, and equality.
- Students develop positive self-concepts, recognize and value their own uniqueness, and accept both their capabilities and their limitations.

To be proficient in supervising the development and implementation of the curriculum, the principal must:

- Understand the community's values and goals and what it wants the curriculum to achieve...
- Set forth, as a continuum, the skills and concepts the curriculum is designed to provide...
- Monitor the curriculum to ensure that the appropriate content and sequence are followed...
- Be familiar with curriculum materials and their relationship to program goals and objectives...
- Seek appropriate resources of time, money, and materials to support the curriculum.

Instruction

The proficient principal leads the way toward creating an environment in which teachers truly teach and learners truly learn.

The principal must be proficient in establishing a productive, caring atmosphere in which students and teachers alike believe that every student can learn and experience success. The proficient principal knows how to help teachers plan and implement teaching strategies that match the curriculum with students' learning needs. Such a principal monitors the students' academic progress, the appropriateness of the tasks assigned them, and the amount of time they spend on academic learning.

The proficient principal helps the faculty ensure that students' achievements match their potential, and applies appropriate principles of teaching and learning in helping teachers refine their teaching skills and acquire new ones. As an instructional leader, the principal leads the way toward creating a stimulating learning environment in which teachers truly teach and learners truly learn.

To be proficient in supervising instruction, the principal must:

- Understand and apply the principles of child growth and development...
- Regularly assess the teaching methods and strategies being used at the school to ensure that they are appropriate and varied...
- Understand and apply validated principles of teaching and learning...
- Apply grouping practices that most effectively meet student needs...
- Understand and apply effective observation and conferencing skills.

Performance

The proficient principal manages matters so that those involved achieve their full potential.

The primary business of education can be described as development of the nation's human resources. For the principal that means managing matters so that all that comprise the student and adult populations of the school achieve their full potential. For this to occur the principal's manner and approach must be such as to inspire trust—to instill a willingness by all concerned to "risk" the investment of commitment and hard work that becoming educated requires.

In winning such trust the proficient principal steadfastly maintains high expectations for student achievement and staff effectiveness, builds consensus concerning the school's mission, and insists—with a pleasant smile—on superior work by the staff and superior attainment by the students. Such principals provide the staff with generous opportunities to enhance their performance and productivity, and encourage them to take advantage of these opportunities. Proficient principals also are concerned with their own continued professional development, both toward acquiring new skills and toward setting an example.

Key elements in improving performance of all those within the school include:

- developing and supporting a clearly stated mission to which everyone in the school is harmoniously committed,
- maintaining an openness toward modification that smoothes the way toward the mission's accomplishment,
- developing a community of learners, and
- promoting a sense of caring and respect for others.

To be proficient in supervising performance the principal must

- Set high expectations for students, staff, parents, and self...
- Appropriately match particular learning styles with particular teaching styles...
- Enhance student and staff strengths and remediate weaknesses...
- Implement validated principles of behavior management...
- Recognize and show concern for personal goals of students and staff...
- Design effective staff and professional development programs that match the goals of both the school and the participating individuals...
- Identify and utilize appropriate instructional support services, and
- Engage in a program of continuing professional development.

Evaluation

Proficient principals recognize that the benefits of evaluation extend no less to themselves than to their students and teachers.

A proficient principal systematically monitors the daily operation of the school toward determining whether the established goals and objectives are being met. Such a principal is well aware of the available evaluation instruments (NAESP's *Standards for Quality Elementary Schools*, for example) and with them gathers information that helps determine which programs would advisedly be continued as is and which modified or perhaps abandoned.

Similar evaluation is made of student performance and teacher/staff effectiveness, toward identifying weaknesses and then developing appropriate assistance plans and remediation efforts. The proficient principal is sensitive to the sometimes delicate issues associated with evaluation and possesses the range of human relations skills required to put the evaluation process into perspective.

Proficient principals are well aware that the purposes and benefits of evaluation extend no less to themselves than to their students and teachers. At least annually they make appropriate self-assessments, perhaps seeking comments from others, and participate in professional development activities focused on areas disclosed to be in need of improvement.

To be proficient in the evaluation aspects of supervision, the principal must:

- Use a variety of techniques and strategies to assess—
  - Student performance,
  - Individual teacher and staff performance,
  - The achievement of curriculum goals,
  - The effectiveness of the total instructional program...
- Assess progress toward achieving goals established for students, teachers, the principalship, and the involvement of parents and the community at large...
- Seek and encourage input from a variety of sources to improve the school's program...
- Use due process procedures and legal assistance in dealing with disciplinary and dismissal cases...
- Develop assistance plans and remediation efforts to improve teaching performance...
- Inspire even the most excellent teachers to acquire new competencies and experiences...
- Demonstrate a level of human relations skills that makes the evaluation process helpful rather than destructive...
- Bring about the kind of rapport among students, teachers, staff, parents, and the community that fosters constructive suggestions for making the school program even stronger.

ADMINISTRATIVE PROFICIENCIES

The arena in which today's principals function extends well beyond the boundaries of an individual school and community.

To assure a quality elementary or middle school program, the range of the principal's administrative skills must include proficiency in administration, particularly in regard to how the school is organized, in fiscal management, and in dealing with the multitude of political pressures and considerations that bear upon the operation of today's schools.

Many of the requisite organizational and fiscal proficiencies cited in this section have historically been a part of most preparation and continuing development programs for principals. The goal here is to identify and emphasize the functional application of these proficiencies.

The subsection dealing with political proficiencies takes special note of a number of day-to-day realities that principals must be able to analyze and manage. The arena in which today's principals function extends well beyond the boundaries of an individual school and a particular community. Principals must increasingly be skillful in dealing with these "outside" matters if they are to assure their students a quality school experience.

Organization

Organizational arrangements will differ in accordance with children's needs, teachers' skills, and the community's priorities.

A school's organization has its genesis in the principal's conceptualization of the mission to be accomplished and the goals and objectives to be achieved. Organizational arrangements will differ from school to school, depending on the principal's analysis of the needs of the children, the skills of the teachers, and the priorities of the particular community.* These considerations having been determined, the way is clear to deal with such matters as resources, space, and time in formulating how the school can best be organized to achieve its purposes.

To meet future needs of schooling, professional preparation and continuing development programs for principals must incorporate the implications of societal trends, demographic and scientific predictions, and technological and educational innovations. It is also important that such programs enable principals to experience practical applications of alternative methods of school organization.

To be proficient in organizing the school's day-to-day functions, the principal must:

- Comprehend and employ validated principles of effective time management...
- Capitalize on the findings of research in making program decisions...
- Develop and implement equitable and effective schedules...
- Collect and appropriately use—with proper respect for confidentiality—school and student data...
- Allocate and organize staff in such a way as to assure accomplishment of the school's mission...
- Develop and use effective, unbiased interviewing skills...
- Attract volunteers and be adept in training and assigning them...
- Manage the operation and maintenance of the physical plant...
- Know education law, including the implications of liability, and keep abreast of developments...
- Develop and implement administrative procedures consistent with board policy and contractual agreements...
- Use strategic planning to implement long-range goals.

*In this connection, research on effective schools has clearly demonstrated that where a principal is made responsible for more than one school, everyone involved gets shortchanged. Multiple-school principalships tend in particular to erode academic achievement, the result of fragmentation of the principal's instructional leadership.

Fiscal

Principals must see and understand the relationships between the instructional program and the budgeting process.

Sound fiscal management begins with the establishment of goals and objectives for the school, within parameters established by the school board budget. Principals thus must see and understand the relationships between various aspects of the instructional program and the budgeting process.

They must at the same time be creative in finding potential new resources to support the school's program, both within and beyond the formal budgeting process and both within and beyond the immediate school community. Such creativity involves proficiency in projecting future school needs, in identifying opportunities and resources that changing circumstances may bring about, in developing grant proposals, and in establishing productive school/business relationships. In general, it requires the ability to enlist many different kinds of groups and individuals in providing support for the school program—and to do so in ways that do not involve children as direct agents of the school.

To be proficient in fiscal management, the principal must:

- Understand the school district budget and its specific implications for the school...
- Plan, prepare, justify, and defend the school budget...
- Manage the school within the allocated resources...
- Use cost control procedures and institute cost-effective practices...
- Interpret budget priorities and constraints to the staff and the community.

Political

The proficient principal is effective in generating public support for the school's program and education in general.

Until recent years, programs for the preparation and continuing development of elementary and middle school principals have tended to ignore (except in the matter of school/community relationships) the increasing demand upon principals to be effective in generating public support for the school's program and for education in general.

Involvement by the principal in a variety of civic activities has been and remains of crucial importance to community acceptance of the instructional program, and to understanding by the principal of the community's values, priorities, and attitudes. Meanwhile, the impact of "the community" has expanded to embrace issues and policies of interest not just locally but of state and national concern.

Preparation and continuing development programs for today's principals thus must include a practical understanding of the political decision-making process and of the ways in which principals can have an impact. Such programs should ensure that K-8 administrators have the appropriate skills to work with local and state boards of education, with legislators, and with government officials at every level.

To be proficient in the political arena, the principal must:

- Understand the dynamics of local, state, and national politics...
- Develop plans and strategies for helping to attract appropriate financial support of education...
- Involve the community's movers and shakers in the development and support of the school's program...
- Identify and apply effective strategies for dealing with political issues and political forces that impinge on the school's operation...
- Participate in local, state, and federal legislative action programs.

CONCLUSION

In this examination of the kinds of professional preparation and continuing development experiences that elementary and middle school principals need if they are to be effective instructional leaders, reference has been made to "proficiencies" rather than "competencies" or "skills"—for a reason. That reason is to emphasize the need for principals not only to have formal training in the day-to-day functions and responsibilities that go with this challenging position but also to have the background and practical exposure necessary to be truly effective in applying this knowledge. The rigors of the principal's job demand both. No preparation program could assure a principal lifetime proficiency. The acquired knowledge and skills must be continually modified and refined so as to respond to the ever-changing needs of students, staff, and the community.

NAESP's *Standards for Quality Elementary Schools* noted that quality schools are never satisfied that all is well; they are continually seeking to improve. The same is true for principals—if they are to be effective instructional leaders.

APPENDIX A

Personal Checklist of Proficiencies

This checklist was designed to help principals assess their professional standing within each of the areas of proficiency cited on the foregoing pages. Its use as a performance evaluation instrument by others would have little if any value due to the fact that such an evaluation must be consonant with specific written performance expectations and standards adopted by a particular district.

The checklist asks the principal to do the following:

1. Indicate the degree to which each proficiency is related to the principal's job within that school;
2. Assess the degree to which the principal believes himself or herself to be proficient in the particular area.
3. For each proficiency compare 1 and 2 and thereby determine whether there is need for growth in that proficiency.

Note that space is provided to make specific comments or suggestions related to the rationale for these ratings. Any thoughts or reminders relative to professional development in that proficiency should be included.

APPENDIX A

LEADERSHIP PROFICIENCIES

Leadership Behavior		LOW MODERATE HIGH
The principal must: Inspire all concerned to join in accomplishing the school's mission.	RELATIONSHIP TO MY JOB	
	MY PERSONAL ASSESSMENT	
	MY PERCEIVED NEED FOR GROWTH	
Comments or Suggestions		
The principal must: Apply effective human relations skills.	RELATIONSHIP TO MY JOB	
	MY PERSONAL ASSESSMENT	
	MY PERCEIVED NEED FOR GROWTH	
Comments or Suggestions		
The principal must: Encourage the leadership of others.	RELATIONSHIP TO MY JOB	
	MY PERSONAL ASSESSMENT	
	MY PERCEIVED NEED FOR GROWTH	
Comments or Suggestions		

Leadership Behavior		LOW MODERATE HIGH
The principal must: Analyze information relative to problems, make decisions, and delegate responsibility as appropriate.	RELATIONSHIP TO MY JOB	
	MY PERSONAL ASSESSMENT	
	MY PERCEIVED NEED FOR GROWTH	
Comments or Suggestions		
The principal must: Create a powerful esprit de corps, a strong sense of togetherness, through effective human relations techniques.	RELATIONSHIP TO MY JOB	
	MY PERSONAL ASSESSMENT	
	MY PERCEIVED NEED FOR GROWTH	
Comments or Suggestions		
The principal must: Identify and creatively utilize human, material, and financial resources to achieve the school's goals.	RELATIONSHIP TO MY JOB	
	MY PERSONAL ASSESSMENT	
	MY PERCEIVED NEED FOR GROWTH	
Comments or Suggestions		

APPENDIX A

LEADERSHIP PROFICIENCIES

Leadership Behavior		LOW MODERATE HIGH
The principal must: Apply established principles and strategies of effective leadership.	RELATIONSHIP TO MY JOB	
	MY PERSONAL ASSESSMENT	
	MY PERCEIVED NEED FOR GROWTH	
Comments or Suggestions		
The principal must: Exercise vision in defining and accomplishing the mission of the school.	RELATIONSHIP TO MY JOB	
	MY PERSONAL ASSESSMENT	
	MY PERCEIVED NEED FOR GROWTH	
Comments or Suggestions		
The principal must: Participate as a member of local, state, and national professional groups.	RELATIONSHIP TO MY JOB	
	MY PERSONAL ASSESSMENT	
	MY PERCEIVED NEED FOR GROWTH	
Comments or Suggestions		

Communication Skills

		LOW	MODERATE	HIGH
The principal must: Persuasively articulate his or her beliefs and effectively defend his or her decisions.	RELATIONSHIP TO MY JOB			
	MY PERSONAL ASSESSMENT			
	MY PERCEIVED NEED FOR GROWTH			
Comments or Suggestions				
The principal must: Write clearly and concisely so that the message is understood by the intended audience.	RELATIONSHIP TO MY JOB			
	MY PERSONAL ASSESSMENT			
	MY PERCEIVED NEED FOR GROWTH			
Comments or Suggestions				
The principal must: Apply facts and data to determine priorities.	RELATIONSHIP TO MY JOB			
	MY PERSONAL ASSESSMENT			
	MY PERCEIVED NEED FOR GROWTH			
Comments or Suggestions				
The principal must: Understand the impact of his or her personal image and how to make that image an effective and useful one.	RELATIONSHIP TO MY JOB			
	MY PERSONAL ASSESSMENT			
	MY PERCEIVED NEED FOR GROWTH			
Comments or Suggestions				

APPENDIX A

LEADERSHIP PROFICIENCIES

Communication Skills

		LOW	MODERATE	HIGH
The principal must: Know his or her verbal and nonverbal communications strengths and weaknesses and their implications.	RELATIONSHIP TO MY JOB			
	MY PERSONAL ASSESSMENT			
	MY PERCEIVED NEED FOR GROWTH			
Comments or Suggestions				
The principal must: Use current communications technology to communicate the school's philosophy, needs, and accomplishments.	RELATIONSHIP TO MY JOB			
	MY PERSONAL ASSESSMENT			
	MY PERCEIVED NEED FOR GROWTH			
Comments or Suggestions				
The principal must: Understand the philosophy, functioning, and practices of the mass media.	RELATIONSHIP TO MY JOB			
	MY PERSONAL ASSESSMENT			
	MY PERCEIVED NEED FOR GROWTH			
Comments or Suggestions				
The principal must: Be an active listener so as to truly hear others.	RELATIONSHIP TO MY JOB			
	MY PERSONAL ASSESSMENT			
	MY PERCEIVED NEED FOR GROWTH			
Comments or Suggestions				

Communication Skills

		LOW	MODERATE	HIGH
The principal must: Be able to forthrightly disagree without being disagreeable.	RELATIONSHIP TO MY JOB			
	MY PERSONAL ASSESSMENT			
	MY PERCEIVED NEED FOR GROWTH			
Comments or Suggestions				
The principal must: Promote and use higher-level thinking skills.	RELATIONSHIP TO MY JOB			
	MY PERSONAL ASSESSMENT			
	MY PERCEIVED NEED FOR GROWTH			
Comments or Suggestions				
The principal must: Model the behavior expected of others.	RELATIONSHIP TO MY JOB			
	MY PERSONAL ASSESSMENT			
	MY PERCEIVED NEED FOR GROWTH			
Comments or Suggestions				

LEADERSHIP PROFICIENCIES

Group Processes

		LOW	MODERATE	HIGH
The principal must: Involve others in setting short- and long-term goals.	RELATIONSHIP TO MY JOB			
	MY PERSONAL ASSESSMENT			
	MY PERCEIVED NEED FOR GROWTH			

Comments or Suggestions

		LOW	MODERATE	HIGH
The principal must: Apply validated principles of group dynamics and facilitation skills.	RELATIONSHIP TO MY JOB			
	MY PERSONAL ASSESSMENT			
	MY PERCEIVED NEED FOR GROWTH			

Comments or Suggestions

		LOW	MODERATE	HIGH
The principal must: Understand how to resolve difficult situations by use of conflict-resolution methods.	RELATIONSHIP TO MY JOB			
	MY PERSONAL ASSESSMENT			
	MY PERCEIVED NEED FOR GROWTH			

Comments or Suggestions

		LOW	MODERATE	HIGH
The principal must: Be aware of various decision-making techniques and be able to match the appropriate technique to the particular situation.	RELATIONSHIP TO MY JOB			
	MY PERSONAL ASSESSMENT			
	MY PERCEIVED NEED FOR GROWTH			

Comments or Suggestions

Group Processes

		LOW	MODERATE	HIGH
The principal must: Identify—with staff—the decision-making procedures the school will follow.	RELATIONSHIP TO MY JOB			
	MY PERSONAL ASSESSMENT			
	MY PERCEIVED NEED FOR GROWTH			

Comments or Suggestions

The principal must: Understand the process of consensus building and apply that process both as a leader and as a member of a group.	RELATIONSHIP TO MY JOB			
	MY PERSONAL ASSESSMENT			
	MY PERCEIVED NEED FOR GROWTH			

Comments or Suggestions

The principal must: Achieve intended outcomes through the use of principles of motivation.	RELATIONSHIP TO MY JOB			
	MY PERSONAL ASSESSMENT			
	MY PERCEIVED NEED FOR GROWTH			

Comments or Suggestions

SUPERVISORY PROFICIENCIES

Curriculum

		LOW	MODERATE	HIGH
The principal must: Understand the community's values and goals and what it wants the curriculum to achieve.	RELATIONSHIP TO MY JOB			
	MY PERSONAL ASSESSMENT			
	MY PERCEIVED NEED FOR GROWTH			

Comments or Suggestions

The principal must: Set forth, as a continuum, the skills and concepts the curriculum is designed to provide.	RELATIONSHIP TO MY JOB			
	MY PERSONAL ASSESSMENT			
	MY PERCEIVED NEED FOR GROWTH			

Comments or Suggestions

The principal must: Monitor the curriculum to ensure that the appropriate content and sequence are followed.	RELATIONSHIP TO MY JOB			
	MY PERSONAL ASSESSMENT			
	MY PERCEIVED NEED FOR GROWTH			

Comments or Suggestions

Curriculum

		LOW	MODERATE	HIGH
The principal must: Be familiar with curriculum materials and their relationship to program goals and objectives.	RELATIONSHIP TO MY JOB			
	MY PERSONAL ASSESSMENT			
	MY PERCEIVED NEED FOR GROWTH			

Comments or Suggestions

		LOW	MODERATE	HIGH
The principal must: Seek appropriate resources of time, money, and materials to support the curriculum.	RELATIONSHIP TO MY JOB			
	MY PERSONAL ASSESSMENT			
	MY PERCEIVED NEED FOR GROWTH			

Comments or Suggestions

APPENDIX A

SUPERVISORY PROFICIENCIES

Instruction		LOW	MODERATE	HIGH
The principal must: Understand and apply the principles of child growth and development.	RELATIONSHIP TO MY JOB			
	MY PERSONAL ASSESSMENT			
	MY PERCEIVED NEED FOR GROWTH			
Comments or Suggestions				
The principal must: Regularly assess the teaching methods and strategies being used at the school to ensure that they are appropriate and varied.	RELATIONSHIP TO MY JOB			
	MY PERSONAL ASSESSMENT			
	MY PERCEIVED NEED FOR GROWTH			
Comments or Suggestions				
The principal must: Understand and apply validated principles of teaching and learning.	RELATIONSHIP TO MY JOB			
	MY PERSONAL ASSESSMENT			
	MY PERCEIVED NEED FOR GROWTH			
Comments or Suggestions				

Instruction

		LOW	MODERATE	HIGH
The principal must: Apply grouping practices that most effectively meet student needs.	RELATIONSHIP TO MY JOB			
	MY PERSONAL ASSESSMENT			
	MY PERCEIVED NEED FOR GROWTH			

Comments or Suggestions

		LOW	MODERATE	HIGH
The principal must: Understand and apply effective observation and conferencing skills.	RELATIONSHIP TO MY JOB			
	MY PERSONAL ASSESSMENT			
	MY PERCEIVED NEED FOR GROWTH			

Comments or Suggestions

APPENDIX A

SUPERVISORY PROFICIENCIES

Performance		LOW	MODERATE	HIGH
The principal must: Set high expectations for students, staff, parents, and self.	RELATIONSHIP TO MY JOB			
	MY PERSONAL ASSESSMENT			
	MY PERCEIVED NEED FOR GROWTH			
Comments or Suggestions				
The principal must: Appropriately match particular learning styles with particular teaching styles.	RELATIONSHIP TO MY JOB			
	MY PERSONAL ASSESSMENT			
	MY PERCEIVED NEED FOR GROWTH			
Comments or Suggestions				
The principal must: Enhance student and staff strengths and remediate weaknesses.	RELATIONSHIP TO MY JOB			
	MY PERSONAL ASSESSMENT			
	MY PERCEIVED NEED FOR GROWTH			
Comments or Suggestions				
The principal must: Implement validated principles of behavior management.	RELATIONSHIP TO MY JOB			
	MY PERSONAL ASSESSMENT			
	MY PERCEIVED NEED FOR GROWTH			
Comments or Suggestions				

Performance		LOW	MODERATE	HIGH
The principal must: Recognize and show concern for personal goals of students and staff.	RELATIONSHIP TO MY JOB			
	MY PERSONAL ASSESSMENT			
	MY PERCEIVED NEED FOR GROWTH			
Comments or Suggestions				
The principal must: Design effective staff and professional development programs that match the goals of both the school and of the participating individuals.	RELATIONSHIP TO MY JOB			
	MY PERSONAL ASSESSMENT			
	MY PERCEIVED NEED FOR GROWTH			
Comments or Suggestions				
The principal must: Identify and utilize appropriate instructional support services.	RELATIONSHIP TO MY JOB			
	MY PERSONAL ASSESSMENT			
	MY PERCEIVED NEED FOR GROWTH			
Comments or Suggestions				
The principal must: Engage in a program of continuing professional development.	RELATIONSHIP TO MY JOB			
	MY PERSONAL ASSESSMENT			
	MY PERCEIVED NEED FOR GROWTH			
Comments or Suggestions				

APPENDIX A

SUPERVISORY PROFICIENCIES

Evaluation

		LOW	MODERATE	HIGH
The principal must: Use a variety of techniques and strategies to assess ■ Student performance ■ Individual teacher and staff performance ■ The achievement of curriculum goals ■ The effectiveness of the total instructional program. *Comments or Suggestions*	**RELATIONSHIP TO MY JOB**			
	MY PERSONAL ASSESSMENT			
	MY PERCEIVED NEED FOR GROWTH			
The principal must: Assess progress toward achieving goals established for students, teachers, the principalship, and the involvement of parents and the community at large. *Comments or Suggestions*	**RELATIONSHIP TO MY JOB**			
	MY PERSONAL ASSESSMENT			
	MY PERCEIVED NEED FOR GROWTH			
The principal must: Seek and encourage input from a variety of sources to improve the school's program. *Comments or Suggestions*	**RELATIONSHIP TO MY JOB**			
	MY PERSONAL ASSESSMENT			
	MY PERCEIVED NEED FOR GROWTH			
The principal must: Use due process procedures and legal assistance in dealing with disciplinary and dismissal cases. *Comments or Suggestions*	**RELATIONSHIP TO MY JOB**			
	MY PERSONAL ASSESSMENT			
	MY PERCEIVED NEED FOR GROWTH			

Evaluation

		LOW MODERATE HIGH
The principal must: Develop assistance plans and remediation efforts to improve teaching performance.	RELATIONSHIP TO MY JOB	
	MY PERSONAL ASSESSMENT	
	MY PERCEIVED NEED FOR GROWTH	
Comments or Suggestions		
The principal must: Inspire even the most excellent teachers to acquire new competencies and experiences.	RELATIONSHIP TO MY JOB	
	MY PERSONAL ASSESSMENT	
	MY PERCEIVED NEED FOR GROWTH	
Comments or Suggestions		
The principal must: Demonstrate a level of human relations skills that makes the evaluation process helpful rather than destructive.	RELATIONSHIP TO MY JOB	
	MY PERSONAL ASSESSMENT	
	MY PERCEIVED NEED FOR GROWTH	
Comments or Suggestions		
The principal must: Bring about the kind of rapport among students, teachers, staff, parents, and the community that fosters constructive suggestions for making the school program even stronger.	RELATIONSHIP TO MY JOB	
	MY PERSONAL ASSESSMENT	
	MY PERCEIVED NEED FOR GROWTH	
Comments or Suggestions		

APPENDIX A

ADMINISTRATIVE PROFICIENCIES

Organization

		LOW	MODERATE	HIGH
The principal must: Comprehend and employ validated principles of effective time management.	RELATIONSHIP TO MY JOB			
	MY PERSONAL ASSESSMENT			
	MY PERCEIVED NEED FOR GROWTH			

Comments or Suggestions

The principal must: Capitalize on the findings of research in making program decisions.	RELATIONSHIP TO MY JOB			
	MY PERSONAL ASSESSMENT			
	MY PERCEIVED NEED FOR GROWTH			

Comments or Suggestions

The principal must: Develop and implement equitable and effective schedules.	RELATIONSHIP TO MY JOB			
	MY PERSONAL ASSESSMENT			
	MY PERCEIVED NEED FOR GROWTH			

Comments or Suggestions

The principal must: Collect and appropriately use—with proper respect for confidentiality—school and student data.	RELATIONSHIP TO MY JOB			
	MY PERSONAL ASSESSMENT			
	MY PERCEIVED NEED FOR GROWTH			

Comments or Suggestions

Organization

		LOW	MODERATE	HIGH
The principal must: Allocate and organize staff in such a way as to assure accomplishment of the school's mission.	RELATIONSHIP TO MY JOB			
	MY PERSONAL ASSESSMENT			
	MY PERCEIVED NEED FOR GROWTH			

Comments or Suggestions

The principal must: Develop and use effective, unbiased interviewing skills.	RELATIONSHIP TO MY JOB			
	MY PERSONAL ASSESSMENT			
	MY PERCEIVED NEED FOR GROWTH			

Comments or Suggestions

The principal must: Attract volunteers and be adept in training and assigning them.	RELATIONSHIP TO MY JOB			
	MY PERSONAL ASSESSMENT			
	MY PERCEIVED NEED FOR GROWTH			

Comments or Suggestions

The principal must: Manage the operation and maintenance of the physical plant.	RELATIONSHIP TO MY JOB			
	MY PERSONAL ASSESSMENT			
	MY PERCEIVED NEED FOR GROWTH			

Comments or Suggestions

APPENDIX A

ADMINISTRATIVE PROFICIENCIES

Organization

		LOW	MODERATE	HIGH
The principal must: Know education law, including the implications of liability, and keep abreast of developments.	RELATIONSHIP TO MY JOB			
	MY PERSONAL ASSESSMENT			
	MY PERCEIVED NEED FOR GROWTH			

Comments or Suggestions

The principal must: Develop and implement administrative procedures consistent with board policy and contractual agreements.	RELATIONSHIP TO MY JOB			
	MY PERSONAL ASSESSMENT			
	MY PERCEIVED NEED FOR GROWTH			

Comments or Suggestions

The principal must: Use strategic planning to implement long-range goals.	RELATIONSHIP TO MY JOB			
	MY PERSONAL ASSESSMENT			
	MY PERCEIVED NEED FOR GROWTH			

Comments or Suggestions

Fiscal

		LOW	MODERATE	HIGH
The principal must: Understand the school district budget and its specific implications for his or her school.	RELATIONSHIP TO MY JOB			
	MY PERSONAL ASSESSMENT			
	MY PERCEIVED NEED FOR GROWTH			
Comments or Suggestions				
The principal must: Plan, prepare, justify, and defend the school budget.	RELATIONSHIP TO MY JOB			
	MY PERSONAL ASSESSMENT			
	MY PERCEIVED NEED FOR GROWTH			
Comments or Suggestions				
The principal must: Manage the school within the allocated resources.	RELATIONSHIP TO MY JOB			
	MY PERSONAL ASSESSMENT			
	MY PERCEIVED NEED FOR GROWTH			
Comments or Suggestions				

ADMINISTRATIVE PROFICIENCIES

Fiscal

		LOW	MODERATE	HIGH
The principal must: Use cost control procedures and institute cost-effective practices.	RELATIONSHIP TO MY JOB			
	MY PERSONAL ASSESSMENT			
	MY PERCEIVED NEED FOR GROWTH			

Comments or Suggestions

		LOW	MODERATE	HIGH
The principal must: Interpret budget priorities and constraints to the staff and the community.	RELATIONSHIP TO MY JOB			
	MY PERSONAL ASSESSMENT			
	MY PERCEIVED NEED FOR GROWTH			

Comments or Suggestions

Political

		LOW	MODERATE	HIGH
The principal must: Understand the dynamics of local, state, and national politics.	RELATIONSHIP TO MY JOB			
	MY PERSONAL ASSESSMENT			
	MY PERCEIVED NEED FOR GROWTH			

Comments or Suggestions

The principal must: Develop plans and strategies for helping to attract appropriate financial support of education.	RELATIONSHIP TO MY JOB			
	MY PERSONAL ASSESSMENT			
	MY PERCEIVED NEED FOR GROWTH			

Comments or Suggestions

The principal must: Involve the community's movers and shakers in the development and support of the school's program.	RELATIONSHIP TO MY JOB			
	MY PERSONAL ASSESSMENT			
	MY PERCEIVED NEED FOR GROWTH			

Comments or Suggestions

ADMINISTRATIVE PROFICIENCIES

Political

		LOW	MODERATE	HIGH
The principal must: Identify and apply effective strategies for dealing with political issues and political forces that impinge on the school's operation.	RELATIONSHIP TO MY JOB			
	MY PERSONAL ASSESSMENT			
	MY PERCEIVED NEED FOR GROWTH			

Comments or Suggestions

		LOW	MODERATE	HIGH
The principal must: Participate in local, state, and federal legislative action programs.	RELATIONSHIP TO MY JOB			
	MY PERSONAL ASSESSMENT			
	MY PERCEIVED NEED FOR GROWTH			

Comments or Suggestions

APPENDIX B

Personal Planning Guide for Professional Development

Appendix B guides principals in the identification of those proficiency areas where efforts for personal improvement should be focused. It is not an evaluation tool for comparison of one principal with another. Three steps are involved:

1. Using the data from Appendix A the principal should make a judgment of his or her perceived level of skill in each proficiency area, according to a scale of Low, Moderate, or High.
2. The ten proficiency areas should then be reviewed and assigned a priority. Improvement efforts should be directed toward those areas perceived as having highest priority for effectiveness in the principalship of this school.
3. The principal should then develop a plan for personal improvement that includes identifying programs to be enrolled in, conferences to be attended, literature to be read, and other specific steps to be taken.

APPENDIX B

LEADERSHIP PROFICIENCIES

PROFICIENCY AREA	PERCEIVED SKILL LEVEL			PRIORITY ASSIGNED
	LOW	MODERATE	HIGH	
Leadership Behavior				
Plan for Personal Improvement				
Communication Skills				
Plan for Personal Improvement				
Group Processes				
Plan for Personal Improvement				

SUPERVISORY PROFICIENCIES

PROFICIENCY AREA	PERCEIVED SKILL LEVEL			PRIORITY ASSIGNED
	LOW	MODERATE	HIGH	
Curriculum				
Plan for Personal Improvement				
Instruction				
Plan for Personal Improvement				
Performance				
Plan for Personal Improvement				
Evaluation				
Plan for Personal Improvement				

APPENDIX B

ADMINISTRATIVE PROFICIENCIES

PROFICIENCY AREA	PERCEIVED SKILL LEVEL			PRIORITY ASSIGNED
	LOW	MODERATE	HIGH	
Organization				
Plan for Personal Improvement				
Fiscal				
Plan for Personal Improvement				
Political				
Plan for Personal Improvement				

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